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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses two programs implemented at elementary schools where volunteer adults became involved in the lives of at-risk students. In the Lunch Buddy program, adults had lunch with their child once a week and talked with them. Within the Caring Adult program the children met weekly with an adult, but the adults rotated. The Lunch Buddies did not offer academic assistance other than possibly helping with homework whereas the Caring Adults provided tutoring services. A program evaluation design was created from a set of variables identified by the program administrators that they hoped would be effected by the two programs. Those variables were: attitude toward school, the student's work ethic, student motivation, the student's attendance, the student's work habits, student cooperation, the student's attention span, the student's self-confidence, the student's social skills, and the student's grades and work quality. Classroom teachers were asked about these variables for both the students involved in the programs and students not involved in the programs. Results indicate that the Lunch Buddy program had the most positive results in terms of change, especially in attitude, work ethic, motivation, social skills, and work quality. Iowa Test of Basic Skills change favored the Caring Adult program students. Five tables show statistical results of the study. (MKA)

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Lunch Buddies; A Program to Involve Caring Adults

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Lunch Buddies; A Program to Involve Caring Adults

INTRODUCTION

It's almost noon and at the Lincoln and Armory schools a dozen or so adults are coming for lunch. It's not that school lunches are so delicious, but it's because they have a lunch date with some very special children. These adults volunteer about one hour a week to mentor students selected as at risk for school failure with the goal of creating meaningful change in the lives of students thus enabling them to succeed. There are over fifty other 'Lunch Buddies', employees of BayState Medical Center, who spend up to one hour a week with students at the Lincoln School, having lunch and chatting with them about whatever the students care to talk about. A similar program is in place at Armory School called 'Caring Adults' where employees of the Big Y Supermarkets met weekly with students to encourage academic and social growth, setting goals for students to strive for and be held accountable to. The corporate partner for Armory changed for the second year of this study with members of a law firm becoming Caring Adults. Both the Lunch Buddy and Caring Adult programs are administered by Springfield School Volunteers (SSV) who does NOT expect or even allow their volunteers to get involved in the private lives of their students apart from having lunch together. Mentors are not to do anything outside of school unless getting specific permission from both the principal and the parents. The liability is just too great.

What impact can these two programs, joining adults and children for just one lunch hour a week, have in the lives of the participating children? Can a volunteer, spending less than an hour a week with elementary aged children, selected because they are at risk of either academic or social failure in school, make any difference at all?

Maria has been involved in the **Caring Adult Program** since its inception in 1994. She has had numerous students to care for and believes wholeheartedly that the program significantly impacts the children socially and emotionally. The fact that there is an academic benefit is just icing on the cake in her view. She sees her role to be one of mentor, role model or, as the program is titled, a Caring Adult. The 45 minutes once a week provides an outlet for students to express their feelings, concerns and share life experiences with an adult who gives them undivided attention. A significant part of their time together includes goal setting for the child. Maria helps her child to discover an area of weakness in herself and then helps her come up with practical ways to overcome it by using simple, incremental steps to reach a specific goal. She is diligent to hold her student accountable to her goals. Although the program was originally designed to be oriented towards academics, she feels she benefits the students much more by meeting them where they are at, which is most often with social needs.

Maria's most significant relationship has involved three children, ages 7, 9 and 11, for the past three years. It began when Maria's daughter, attending a local college, became a Caring Adult to one of these children. When her daughter graduated Maria felt they couldn't just drop the child so she got involved. The relationship evolved to include the other two siblings. When both their parents died within the next year, Maria knew that her role in their lives was even more vital than she had imagined it could be. Their grandparents took custody and Maria began to develop a relationship with them, realizing she would need to earn their trust to be able to continue her relationship with the children. She sees that their lives have flourished under the care of their loving grandparents and she is delighted to be allowed to be part of their lives, knowing that she also has contributed to their healthy development and higher academic achievement. But the benefits are two-fold. Maria's eyes have been opened to an underprivileged life style that she has had no previous experience with. Her life has been enriched as well.

Angela's experience as a **Lunch Buddy** has been different each year because of the differing personalities of each child she has been assigned. She wishes she could have stayed with the same child to build an ongoing relationship as some of the other volunteers have done. During the 1996-97 school years she was a Lunch Buddy to a very quiet, unresponsive little girl. Although she continued meeting with her weekly, she felt she had little impact on the child and really didn't get beyond a surface relationship with her. During the 1997-98 school year Angela had a fourth grade boy named Joe who was full of energy and enthusiasm. He greeted her with a hug every time she arrived. Even a year later she gets a surprise hug from him when he sees her in the halls. Every week when she arrived they would chat about what each of them had done during the previous week and then they would play a game, read a book, do a puzzle or go outside. Joe particularly loved to take Angela to the school's science labs or computer room to show her what he knew. A special treat included a walk to BayState Medical Center to have lunch.

Angela knows that her two students had very different personalities but she also credits the success of her second year with the enthusiastic participation of the teacher. Joe's teacher was very involved with the students and their Lunch Buddies. She was just as enthusiastic as the kids were when they arrived. She made a point of including the Lunch Buddies in any special activities in the classroom as well as a field trip to Boston at the end of the year. Angela believes the class teacher can have a lot to do in creating an environment in which the program will succeed.

At the beginning of the 1996-97 School Year, the SSV requested the Research Department of Springfield Public Schools to evaluate the effectiveness of the program in 1996-97. How does one evaluate changes in a student's ATTITUDE towards School, a student's WORK ETHIC? How can one tell if a student is MOTIVATED to work or has better WORK HABITS? Can one determine if a student is more COOPERATIVE, has a higher ATTENTION SPAN, more SELF CONFIDENCE and better SOCIAL SKILLS as a result of the program? Perhaps one can measure GRADES and WORK QUALITY and can chart ATTENDANCE, but these others are very subjective judgments. The evaluation design was based on asking the classroom teachers who knew the students and who may even have selected them for the program to judge the status of each of those variables and to judge whether there had been any change in them.

But to just ask for testimonials would have biased the judgments. Therefore, a control group of students, matched to the selected students as closely as possible, was identified. Then a uninvolved volunteer, one from the Research Department Staff and another from the Homeless Tutorial Program, were enlisted to interview the student's teachers. In almost every case, the teacher became involved in making the judgments without seeming to know who was in the program and who was the control. It appeared to be a neat way to gather data about hard to measure variables. The evaluation design was replicated in 1997-98.

PROCEDURES

The Caring Adult program at Armory differs a bit from the Lunch Buddy Program at Lincoln in that the students have been identified by their teachers as being academically at risk and the volunteers are encouraged to give time to tutoring as well as caring. The students in the Lunch Buddy Program at Lincoln have been chosen as having social needs that puts them at risk. The volunteers at Lincoln are asked to eat lunch with the students and talk to them. At Armory, each participating student meets weekly with a caring adult , like at Lincoln, except that at Armory the volunteers rotate their time out of the office. While each participating student at Lincoln sees their caring adult once each week for lunch, the participating students at Armory see a caring adult once a week for academic support, except that the adult is not always the same from week to week. Lincoln students received no systematic academic support from their Lunch Buddies, although some of the adults do bring books and other academic materials or games, and sometimes they would help with homework during lunch. The Caring Adult Program at Armory began at least a year before the Lunch Buddy Program at Lincoln began.

To get some comparison of the effectiveness of the program, each participating student was matched with another student, not selected to be in the program, from the same classroom (same school, teacher, grade level) having the same gender, same ethnicity and the same general level of achievement as measured by the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) Basic Battery Grade Equivalent Score administered each Fall. Some matches were slightly off in terms of ethnicity and achievement, there not being enough students in each classroom to accomplish exact matches.

For the start, it was decided NOT to use academic test data because the lack of variability among the participants might preclude seeing any change. The evaluation design was created from a set of variables identified by the program administrators that they hoped would be effected by the Lunch Buddy and Caring Adult Programs. Those variables were: ATTITUDE towards school, the student's WORK ETHIC, how MOTIVATED the student, the student's ATTENDANCE, the student's WORK HABITS, how COOPERATIVE the student, the student's ATTENTION SPAN, the student's SELF CONFIDENCE, the student's SOCIAL SKILLS, and the student's GRADES and WORK QUALITY. The procedures sought to find out not only the status of every variable for each student, both program participants and matched control, but also to learn how each variable changed over the course of the school year. No test was found to measure these variables with any validity or reliability, so two questions were constructed for each of the ten variables, one asking about status, one asking about change.

As a result of this plan, the classroom teachers in Armory and Lincoln, who had at least one of the students in their classroom, were asked about these ten variables for both the students selected for the program and for the students not selected but identified as matched on demographic characteristics, using the questions shown in the tables of results below. The interviewer was a member of the Research Department in 1996-97 and an employee of Springfield School Volunteers in 1997-98, neither knowing which students were participants or not.

It was decided to ask the teachers, those most knowledgeable of each student, to rate that student on a three point scale for both status and change. Status questions were asked to determine at what level on the ten variables were each of the students. Change questions were to determine if the student's status had changed over the course of the school year. The responses of the teachers were coded as follows: For Status - (1) fair, "lousy", not too good; (2) "OK", good, acceptable; (3) Very good, Great! For Change - (1) gotten worse; (2) stayed the same; (3) improved. High Scores indicated success. The ratings were averaged for both the participant students and the matched students, for both Armory students and Lincoln students, and for both 1996-97 and for 1997-98.

Most teachers were more than willing to give the asked for information on their students. Some were delighted with the progress they had witnessed in their students and one or two even went so far as to say they thought the relationship they had with their Lunch Buddies contributed to their improved attitude or self esteem or grades. Fortunately, many did not seem to know that the information was being gathered on the Lunch Buddy and Caring Adult programs.

In contrast , one teacher was so skeptical of the process that she was unwilling to answer any evaluation questions about her students. When asked questions like "How is Jerome's work ethic? or What is his attitude towards school?" her answer was always "Fine, just fine." She believed that all students make some degree of progress during the school year so she felt it would be irrelevant for her to answer questions regarding whether or not the students had improved. Even when it was fully disclosed why she was being interviewed she said things like, "Well, of course adults make a difference in a child's life but I refuse to draw any conclusions from that regarding the Lunch Buddy Program." She felt that the interviewer was completely disconnected with the realities of a typical school day and that the questions asked would all be impossible to answer.

RESULTS

How good was the matching between students selected for the program and those identified as a matched control? Table 1 shows the Program Participants and the Control students ITBS scores for both years. The differences between the two groups on the Fall administration of the ITBS was two months or less. This difference was designed to be small because of purposeful matching. The Spring differences were equally small in 1996-97, but the Caring Adult Program at Armory showed larger gains and a bigger difference than the Lunch Buddy Program at Lincoln. While the students in Lincoln came close to the expected gain between the Fall and the Spring, seven (7) months, the students at Armory had considerably greater gains.

Table 1
Comparison of Average ITBS Grade Equivalent Scores

		1996-97			1997-98		
		Prog	Cont	Diff	Prog	Cont	Diff
Fall Scores	Armory	3.4	3.2	2	3.9	3.8	1
	Lincoln	3.1	3.3	2	3.4	3.4	0
Spring Scores	Armory	4.6	4.6	0	5.6	4.7	9
	Lincoln	4.0	3.9	1	4.1	4.1	0
Months Gain	Armory	12	14		17	9	
	Lincoln	9	6		7	7	
Number of Students	Armory	13	13		22	22	
	Lincoln	15	15		23	23	

Accepting the matching as useful, the next question was do the program participants and their matched controls differ on the evaluation variables? Was either program effective in producing any changes? The ratings from the teachers for the participants and the control group were averaged for each of the 20 variables, ten for status and ten for change, with the mean difference between the participants and the control group noted. Differences were judged to be significant at the five percent or less level of statistical significance ($p<.05$); differences less than one percent ($p<.01$) were noted.

Table 2 depicts the comparison between the participants and the control group at both Armory and Lincoln for 1996-97. There was no significant difference between the two groups in terms of status or change, through the status ratings looked a bit higher for the control group. This was expected since the participants were selected to have a Lunch Buddy because they were at some higher level of risk than the other students. Both the control group and the participants showed a tendency (.05) to have higher change ratings than status ratings. This may have been the natural tendency of teachers to perceive more success at the end of a year than at the beginning for both groups of students.

Table 2
Comparison of Program and Control Mean Ratings for 1996-97

	Prog	Cont	Diff
1. What is the student's ATTITUDE towards School?	2.21	2.43	-.21
How has this changed over the school year?	2.68	2.46	.21
2. How would you describe the student's WORK ETHIC?	2.11	2.39	-.29
How has this changed over the school year?	2.68	2.50	.18
3. How MOTIVATED is the student to work?	2.21	2.25	-.04
How has this changed over the school year?	2.57	2.50	.07
4. What is the student's ATTENDANCE record?	2.54	2.43	.11
How has this changed over the school year?	2.14	2.36	-.21
5. Describe the student's WORK HABITS.	2.11	2.25	-.14
How has this changed over the school year?	2.39	2.53	-.14
6. How COOPERATIVE is the student?	2.46	2.61	-.14
How has this changed over the school year?	2.46	2.57	-.11
7. What is the student's ATTENTION SPAN?	2.18	2.25	-.07
How has this changed over the school year?	2.32	2.46	-.14
8. Describe the student's SELF CONFIDENCE.	1.96	2.07	-.11
How has this changed over the school year?	2.82	2.85	-.04
9. Describe the student's SOCIAL SKILLS.	2.29	2.42	-.14
How has this changed over the school year?	2.68	2.64	.04
10. How are the student's GRADES and WORK QUALITY?	2.25	2.14	.11
How has this changed over the school year?	2.64	2.50	.14

t (Status) = -1.26 No Significant Difference Degrees of Freedom (df) = 18
t (Change) = 0.00 No Significant Difference
t (Program) = 2.88 $p<.05$ The mean ratings for Change were higher than Status for participants
t (Control) = 2.76 $p<.05$ The mean ratings for Change were higher for the control group.

On this three point rating scale, 2.00 is the midpoint while 2.75 or higher indicate success for most of the group. The t-test for status compares the mean status ratings of the participants to the control group. The t-test for change compares the mean Change ratings of the participants to the control group. The t-test for Program compares the mean status ratings to the mean Change ratings for the participants while The t-test for Control compares the mean status ratings to the mean Change ratings for the control group.

The initial evaluative conclusion suggested that these two programs created no more change in students at risk, as defined by the ten Change variables, than a matched control group. This was discouraging. But further reflection considered that the students at Armory were thought to be selected because they were seen as more at risk for academic failure while the students at Lincoln were identified as being at risk for social failure. This bias in recruitment was considered small but still worthy of investigation. The data was therefore disaggregated for the two schools.

Table 3 displays the results for just Armory. Just as in the analysis above, there were no differences between those selected for participation and those selected as a matched control group.

Table 3
Comparison of Program and Control Mean Ratings at Armory for 1996-97

	Prog	Cont	Diff
1. What is the student's ATTITUDE towards School?	2.31	2.54	-.23
How has this changed over the school year?	2.46	2.38	.08
2. How would you describe the student's WORK ETHIC?	2.31	2.46	-.15
How has this changed over the school year?	2.69	2.54	.15
3. How MOTIVATED is the student to work?	2.46	2.31	.15
How has this changed over the school year?	2.54	2.54	0
4. What is the student's ATTENDANCE record?	2.62	2.54	.08
How has this changed over the school year?	2.38	2.54	-.16
5. Describe the student's WORK HABITS.	2.38	2.23	.15
How has this changed over the school year?	2.31	2.62	-.31
6. How COOPERATIVE is the student?	2.46	2.85	-.39
How has this changed over the school year?	2.31	2.54	-.23
7. What is the student's ATTENTION SPAN?	2.38	2.31	.07
How has this changed over the school year?	2.23	2.46	-.23
8. Describe the student's SELF CONFIDENCE.	2.23	2.23	0
How has this changed over the school year?	2.69	2.85	-.16
9. Describe the student's SOCIAL SKILLS.	2.38	2.62	-.24
How has this changed over the school year?	2.54	2.69	-.15
10. How are the student's GRADES and WORK QUALITY?	2.31	2.31	0
How has this changed over the school year?	2.62	2.62	0

t (Status) = - 0.75 No Significant Difference
t (Program) = -1.47 No Significant Difference
t (Change) = -1.52 No Significant Difference
t (Control) = -1.86 No Significant Difference

Would that same result hold for the Lunch Buddy Program at Lincoln? Table 4 renders the results for just Lincoln. Unlike at Armory, there WAS a significant difference between participants and the control group. While both the participants and the control group had higher mean ratings for Change than for Status, the mean ratings for Change for the participants was significantly higher than the mean ratings of Change for the control group. This meant that the Lunch Buddy Program DID produce the desired change in the participating students.

Table 4
Comparison of Program and Control Mean Ratings at Lincoln for 1996-97

	Prog	Cont	Diff
1. What is the student's ATTITUDE towards School?	2.13	2.33	-.20
How has this changed over the school year?	2.87	2.53	**.34**
2. How would you describe the student's WORK ETHIC?	1.93	2.27	-.34
How has this changed over the school year?	2.67	2.47	**.20**
3. How MOTIVATED is the student to work?	2.00	2.20	-.20
How has this changed over the school year?	2.60	2.47	**.13**
4. What is the student's ATTENDANCE record?	2.47	2.33	.14
How has this changed over the school year?	2.60	2.20	**.40**
5. Describe the student's WORK HABITS.	1.87	2.27	-.40
How has this changed over the school year?	2.47	2.47	0
6. How COOPERATIVE is the student?	2.47	2.40	.07
How has this changed over the school year?	2.60	2.60	0
7. What is the student's ATTENTION SPAN?	2.00	2.20	-.20
How has this changed over the school year?	2.40	2.47	-.07
8. Describe the student's SELF CONFIDENCE.	1.73	1.93	-.20
How has this changed over the school year?	2.93	2.87	.06
9. Describe the student's SOCIAL SKILLS.	2.20	2.27	-.07
How has this changed over the school year?	2.80	2.60	**.20**
10. How are the student's GRADES and WORK QUALITY?	2.20	2.00	.20
How has this changed over the school year?	2.67	2.40	**.27**

t (Status) = -1.34 No Significant Difference
t (Change) = 2.03 $p<.05$ The mean ratings for Change were higher for participants than for Control
t (Program) = -6.02 $p<.01$ The mean ratings for Change were higher than Status for participants
t (Control) = - 4.03 $p<.01$ The mean ratings for Change were higher than Status for Control group

On Table 4, six Change variables were highlighted as the variables that contributed to the significant mean difference. They were ATTITUDE, WORK ETHIC, MOTIVATION, ATTENDANCE, SOCIAL SKILLS and WORK QUALITY. Four variables apparently were not changed by students having a Lunch Buddy: WORK HABITS, COOPERATION, ATTENTION SPAN, and SELF CONFIDENCE. The reason for this delineation requires more study, especially on the impact of a caring adult in the life of a young person. Also, the delineation may have to do with the perceived definition of the variables as rated by the teacher, or the delineation may be dependent on some personal characteristics of the individual Lunch Buddy.

The Springfield School Volunteers were pleased with this result and decided to continue the Lunch Buddy and Caring Adult programs for 1997-98 thus allowing a replication of the study. Far too often an educational evaluation result, especially a positive one, is cited as evidence for major program changes or curriculum innovations when in fact the result may by unique or spurious. Replication of results lends credibility if not validity to the conclusions based on those results.

As in the previous year, the results in 1997-98 for both Armory and Lincoln combined indicated no significant difference between the two groups in terms of status or change. Since the selection procedures for Armory and Lincoln remained the same for both years, the data again was disaggregated between the two schools. Table 5 shows the data for Armory with some curious results. Mean ratings for Status were significantly higher for the participants than for the control group. Almost all of the mean ratings for Status were at mid scale with the ratings for change lower. This suggested that the Caring Adult Program, in keeping with the selection bias toward identifying students at risk of academic failure, left behind students who were more at risk for social failure who were then selected to serve as the matched control. It appears that there are a lot of students with social needs.

Table 5
Comparison of Program and Control Mean Ratings at Armory for 1997-98

	Prog	Cont	Diff
1. What is the student's ATTITUDE towards School?	2.41	2.73	-.32
How has this changed over the school year?	2.18	2.09	.09
2. How would you describe the student's WORK ETHIC?	2.41	2.14	.27
How has this changed over the school year?	2.09	2.05	.04
3. How MOTIVATED is the student to work?	2.36	2.09	.25
How has this changed over the school year?	2.14	2.09	.05
4. What is the student's ATTENDANCE record?	2.82	2.50	.32
How has this changed over the school year?	2.14	2.18	-.04
5. Describe the student's WORK HABITS.	2.41	2.05	.36
How has this changed over the school year?	2.18	2.14	.04
6. How COOPERATIVE is the student?	2.55	2.14	.41
How has this changed over the school year?	2.23	2.43	-.20
7. What is the student's ATTENTION SPAN?	2.27	2.23	.04
How has this changed over the school year?	2.09	2.14	-.05
8. Describe the student's SELF CONFIDENCE.	2.41	2.27	.14
How has this changed over the school year?	2.18	2.23	-.05
9. Describe the student's SOCIAL SKILLS.	2.41	2.18	.23
How has this changed over the school year?	2.18	2.18	0
10. How are the student's GRADES and WORK QUALITY?	2.41	2.14	.27
How has this changed over the school year?	2.14	2.09	.05

t (Status) = 2.37 $p<.05$ Control group has higher mean ratings for Status
t (Change) = 1.03 No Significant Difference
t (Program) = 6.01 $p<.01$ The mean ratings for Status were higher than Change for participants
t (Control) = 1.81 No Significant Difference

Table 6 reports the mean ratings for just the Lunch Buddy Program at Lincoln. Just as seen in the previous year, the participants had higher Change ratings than Status ratings. As in 1996-97, those Change variables that contributed to the significant mean difference are highlighted. In 1996-97 there were six. Of those three were repeated ATTITUDE, MOTIVATION and SOCIAL SKILLS. The three others, WORK ETHIC, WORK QUALITY and ATTENDANCE showed little difference. The four variables that were not changed by students having a Lunch Buddy in 1996-97 were also not changed in 1997-98: WORK HABITS, COOPERATION, ATTENTION SPAN, and SELF CONFIDENCE. As in the year before, the results were interpreted to mean that the Lunch Buddy Program DID produce the desired change in the participating students.

Table 6
Comparison of Program and Control Mean Rating at Lincoln for 1997-98

	Prog	Cont	Diff
1. What is the student's ATTITUDE towards School?	2.30	2.52	-.22
How has this changed over the school year?	2.52	2.39	**.13**
2. How would you describe the student's WORK ETHIC?	2.04	2.48	-.44
How has this changed over the school year?	2.48	2.48	0
3. How MOTIVATED is the student to work?	2.22	2.22	0
How has this changed over the school year?	2.52	2.48	**.04**
4. What is the student's ATTENDANCE record?	2.52	2.87	-.35
How has this changed over the school year?	2.17	2.22	-.05
5. Describe the student's WORK HABITS.	2.00	2.35	-.35
How has this changed over the school year?	2.48	2.48	0
6. How COOPERATIVE is the student?	2.43	2.39	.04
How has this changed over the school year?	2.35	2.43	-.08
7. What is the student's ATTENTION SPAN?	1.96	2.39	-.43
How has this changed over the school year?	2.30	2.35	-.05
8. Describe the student's SELF CONFIDENCE.	1.96	2.26	-.30
How has this changed over the school year?	2.61	2.65	-.04
9. Describe the student's SOCIAL SKILLS.	2.30	2.39	-.09
How has this changed over the school year?	2.52	2.48	**.04**
10. How are the student's GRADES and WORK QUALITY?	2.04	2.43	-.39
How has this changed over the school year?	2.39	2.52	-.13

t (Status) = -2.92 $p<.01$ Control group has higher Status ratings than the participants
t (Change) = -0.24 No Significant Difference
t (Program) = -3.33 $p<.01$ For the participants, Change ratings were higher than Status ratings
t (Cont) = -0.26 No Significant Difference

Comparing only the participants at Armory to those at Lincoln, Armory students had significantly higher mean ratings (2.45) for Status than participants at Lincoln (2.18), [t=3.34, p<.01], while participants at Lincoln had significantly higher Change ratings (2.44) than those at Armory (2.15), [t=-6.47, p<.01]. This is the same result as in 1996-97 when Armory students had significantly higher mean ratings (2.39) for Status than participants at Lincoln (2.10), [t=3.39, p<.01], while participants at Lincoln had significantly higher Change ratings (2.66) than those at Armory (2.48), [t=-2.46, p<.05]. This result is attributed to the selection bias of the two programs.

CONCLUSION

These results indicate that the Lunch Buddy Program had the most positive results in terms of CHANGE, especially in ATTITUDE, WORK ETHIC, MOTIVATION, SOCIAL SKILLS and WORK QUALITY. ITBS change favored the Caring Adult Program students. The conclusion seems warranted that the Lunch Buddy Program met its goal to contribute to meaningful change in the lives of students at risk of social failure.

The results from the academic measures indicate that the Caring Adult Program at Armory has had a positive impact on the academic achievement of the students participating in the program.

Students at both Armory and Lincoln have a host of factors that influence their lives and their performance in school. Many come from homes that are eligible for economic assistance. Many from single adult households. In answering some questions for the interviewer in 1998, one teacher began most answers for one student with. "Well, that depends if he took his medication or not". Students at both Armory and Lincoln were selected for the program because they were experiencing such factors. That the program had an impact at all is remarkable, and that it had a similar impact for two different years is truly amazing. Perhaps that success is due to the kind of people who volunteer and the willingness of teachers to accept their involvement.

CLOSING VIGNETTES

Marcia was only involved in the Lunch Buddy Program for one year but she felt that year was significant for both her and the child she cared for, Anna. Anna was being raised by her mother who was a foster mother to several other children. These children had the same names as Marcia's own children which produced an instant bond between them. They spent their lunch time talking about issues that Anna brought up and all of their activities were driven by her desires. Anna gave Marcia a tour of the school and enjoyed reading with her and practicing her math. Occasionally Marcia would coordinate with another Lunch Buddy to take their girls out to lunch across the street to the hospital where they worked. That was a fun way to see Anna interact with her friends and for Anna to see Marcia in her work world.

Marcia got to know Anna's family, her parents and brothers, and visited in their home. They gave her permission to take Anna out at other times for lunch, to the zoo and even to Boston for the day. The relationships between these volunteers and their students have been limited to the time at school. Each principal discourages interaction outside of school hours for liability reasons. Some volunteers have been slightly frustrated by this, wishing they could get more involved, seeing their role as key in the emotional, social and academic development of their kids. They see the goal setting time and the undivided attention during the weekly 45 minutes as being invaluable to the kids. They care about what their kids care about and the kids know that and actually seem to glow in the attention they receive, especially in the presence of other students. One said, "They light up when you come in! Other students in the room announce, 'Wanda, your friend Mrs. Smith is here!' " Marcia feels both she and her student benefited from spending time together and she would do it again in a second if her work schedule would allow it.

When **Julie** signed on to the Caring Adult Program at the Armory School she encouraged her co-workers to join her but she had no idea how committed and involved she would become or that her relationship would develop to the degree it has. In 1994 she was interviewed for the program and was well matched with Sondra, an insecure, unkempt second grader from a broken home, living with her grandmother. Julie, with no children of her own, wondered what she had to offer a little girl from such a different background. She met weekly with Sondra simply to be a friend. Academic tutoring was not initially a priority for Julie, instead she began with simple talks about hygiene, cleaning her fingernails and proper bathing and shampooing routines. She helped Sondra care about herself. This led them to talk about and learn about their different cultures and life experiences.

There were two significant turning points in their relationship. The first one came when Sondra and Julie began to set goals together. The goals were both personal and academic, short range and long range and much to Julie's surprise Sondra began to meet them! Julie rewarded her in small ways like sharing an ice cream cone. Sondra loved it. Her grades began to improve to the point where she made first honors. But when Julie first mentioned college Sondra said, "I ain't going to no college." Julie's heart sank and she thought, what am I doing here? However, she decided to make the word college part of her regular conversations with Sondra and after a

time Sondra began to verbalize reasons she felt she could never attend. Julie explained about grants and scholarships and keeping her grades up. The second turning point in their relationship came one day when Sondra made it perfectly clear that she had every intention of going to college! Julie was thrilled! Together they opened a bank account that increases as Sondra meets her academic goals and Julie rewards her. With so many pregnant teens in Sondra's environment, Julie determined to instill in her the progression of first college, next marriage, then children. She intends to continue encouraging Sondra in that direction.